

*Canada Elections Act*

We have been advocating such a measure for the past ten years. It was argued some ten or fifteen years ago that this would be too costly. Everybody has cards today. It is the social insurance number that matters nowadays. Well, let us require identification with a photo and the social insurance number for voting purposes. I am sure fewer votes would be stolen if every voter were required to produce his identification card before casting his ballot. We have been pressing for that for a long time. Neither one of the old parties, Liberals or Conservatives, is willing to admit that. In my opinion, both of them are taking advantage of this situation, this is why they do not want it. The measure we propose, would bring justice to voters and prevent people from assuming somebody else's name and using it to vote. But when he has his identification card he will not be able to vote on behalf of someone else.

In my riding of Roberval, although I keep an eye open I still get robbed of 1,000 to 1,500 votes in every election. If we had that identification card that would not happen.

Second, I would like to propose an amendment in committee relating to the preparation of election lists. Those who are appointed to prepare the election lists realize that in urban ridings everything is fine because the incumbent party and the opposition are both represented—there are two people to prepare the lists. In rural ridings the returning officer appoints only one person who can prepare the list the way he wants, forget the names of those he wants to forget and add to the list the names of the people of his choice.

Since we are talking about the justice of the vote, to really give the voter justice I think we should use two people in rural ridings as we do in urban ridings to have a better supervision and thus fewer mistakes. You might tell me: In rural ridings, if a name is forgotten the person can be sworn in afterwards. But that is precisely the trick, Mr. Speaker. They even bring in people from the city to be sworn in in rural ridings in our areas because they have forgotten about the cities. That is the trick, that is where we, the little parties, do not have the money to buy people out and we get shafted.

That went even further. So much had been going on in certain polls that the returning officer even phoned me at a certain moment to tell me: There are a lot of errors going on in the poll, people voted who did not have the right to vote. Do you close the poll or do you keep it open? I said, to be fair to everybody: Keep it open, we will see later. And certain big parties were still continuing with their little trick. Some of those people are so used to it, they were brought up in it and they consider stealing votes a sport.

In my area I know elderly people almost past death-time, people 75 and over, who hit the road come every election day to have a go at that old trick, stealing votes.

When this bill is passed, I would be much pleased indeed if there was an amendment providing for compulsory identity cards for voters. We will start thinking there is some justice if we have what is needed to finance elections, and I really mean "what is needed"—of course I am not referring here to small amounts from \$10 to \$100, so that all sums of money over \$100 are publicly disclosed. The public is entitled to know

[Mr. Gauthier (Roberval).]

what is going on financially, and this will ensure some degree of supervision.

As far as voting is concerned, when we have the identity cards we will be laying some solid foundation for the supervision of voting in our areas, so that we may know who is entitled to vote and who is not.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude on the hope that the committee will take good note of my remarks, that finally an end will come to camouflage legislation, legislation favouring those who win elections by spending millions and hundreds of millions, that there is at least an attempt to protect evolving parties, the only ones capable of telling what is going on in government, of telling the truth to the people.

● (1622)

[English]

**Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say that I welcome the introduction of this bill before the House. It culminates the work of many dedicated individuals who have worked with the Chief Electoral Officer over the past three years. Representatives of the four registered parties began meeting with Mr. Hamel and his staff in February of 1974, and discussions have been held by the ad hoc committee regularly since that time. I have had the privilege of serving on this committee over the past number of months, so I have a vital interest in the bill now before us.

I cannot speak too highly of the guidance and suggestions which Mr. Hamel provided, and I look forward to further discussions in the committee. I am sure Mr. Hamel's wise counsel will be helpful in explaining aspects of this bill to hon. members of the House. Well over 200 paragraphs of amendments were proposed by the ad hoc committee, and I am pleased to be able to report that the majority of these have been included as discussed and suggested by members of the committee.

I know that hon. members of this House, as well as Canadians at large, will welcome the progressive aspect of the bill. Amendments to assist incapacitated voters have been proposed and a number of measures have been put forward to make the act more intelligible to the average voter and to encourage more Canadians to participate in our political process. As in the case of any act which amends prior legislation, a good many of the amendments which have been proposed are primarily housekeeping in nature. We are pleased to accept the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer regarding items of this nature. It is gratifying to note that the act worked well in the last ten by-elections. Our party has been happy to comply with the spirit as well as the intent of the law. We will continue to work within the spirit of this act, as I believe that the openness which it provides in many areas is in keeping with the spirit pervading Canadian life.

● (1632)

As has been pointed out, however, the government does not seem to share our views regarding this progressive spirit of openness. I should initially point out that there are a few minor